



**NTSB**

# ***SAFETY ALERT***

National Transportation Safety Board

## **★ Child Passenger Safety**

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***Proper restraints, correctly installed,  
save lives of our youngest passengers***

### ***The grim facts:***

- Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death to children.
- Of those children involved in fatal crashes in 2003, 15 percent of infants, 19 percent of toddlers ages 1 to 3, and 28 percent of children ages 4 to 7 were unrestrained.
- Children exposed to deployed air bags are twice as likely to suffer significant injury than children not exposed.
- From 1994 through 2003, 3,942 children ages 4 through 7 were killed while riding in motor vehicles. Over 87 percent who died were unrestrained or in an adult seat belt.
- Eight out of 10 child safety seats are not properly installed, putting children at increased risk of serious injury or even death. To be protected, children must be properly restrained in seats appropriate for their age, height, and weight.
- Children inappropriately restrained in seat belts are 3.5 times more likely to suffer abdominal injury and 4 times more likely to suffer head/brain injury than children appropriately restrained in booster seats.
- Once children outgrow their traditional child safety seats (usually at about age 4), they need to ride in booster seats to age 8. Without a booster seat, the lap belt can ride over a child's stomach and the shoulder belt can cut across a child's neck. As this position is uncomfortable, children frequently remove the shoulder portion of the adult seat belt, increasing their risk of head injury.

### ***Effective actions to save the lives of youngsters:***

- Children under age 13 should sit in a rear seat, if one is available.
- Place a child in the rear seat; this reduces the risk of injury by 33 percent.
- Use a booster seat and seat belt rather than just a seat belt alone for a 4-to-8 year old; this will reduce a child's risk of injury by 59 percent.
- Make sure you use the right restraint for your child and install it correctly.
  - o Infants, until they are at least 20 lbs. and at least 1 year old, should be in a rear-facing child safety seat.
  - o Toddlers, until they are about 40 lbs. or age 4, should be in a child safety seat facing forward.
  - o Children, until they are about 80 lbs or age 8, should be in booster seats.
  - o All children should use seat belts after they outgrow booster seats.

### ***What can you do to protect young children riding in vehicles?***

- Be sure all children in your vehicle are properly restrained for their age, height, and weight.
- Have your child safety seat inspected at a fitting station by a trained technician. (see [www.seatcheck.org](http://www.seatcheck.org) for locations)
- Talk to or write to your State and local lawmakers and urge them to support the National Transportation Safety Board's recommendations for State laws.

### ***Need more information?***

Visit the following Web sites:

NTSB: [www.nts.gov](http://www.nts.gov);

National Safe Kids: [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org);

American Academy of Pediatrics: [www.aap.org/family/cps.htm](http://www.aap.org/family/cps.htm);

Seat Check: [www.seatcheck.org](http://www.seatcheck.org);

Fit for a Kid: [www.fitforakid.org](http://www.fitforakid.org)